

PRONGHORN

Official Publication of the Arizona Antelope Foundation, Inc., a Non-Profit, Tax-Exempt Corporation ~ Volume 10, Number 1, Winter 2004

AZ AUCTION TAG RESULTS IN WORLD RECORD!



FOR THE BOOK

By Bill Keebler

A new World's Record pronghorn from Arizona has been certified by the Boone and Crockett Club. It was taken by Dr. David Meyer on August 9, 2002 and has an astounding score of 95 points.

The Boone and Crockett Club changed its policy a few years ago and now will convene Special Judges Panels for the express purpose of verifying and announcing potential new World's Records. This is the second time a Special Judges Panel has been convened for this purpose. Prior to this change in policy in 2001 a potential World's Record would have to wait for up to three years for the triennial Awards Program. This meant that the animal could shrink substantially in three years and a World's Records could simply never be recognized if a bigger animal was taken before the end of the three year Awards Program period.

Dr. Meyer purchased the Arizona auction tag at the 2002 Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society (continued on page 12)

Trophy Hunter Magazine "The Second Chance Buck" by Dr. David Meyer

It was then so difficult at first to accept when, after a brief period of syncope, I went on a Friday afternoon to my doctor friend for a recurrent pleurisy. After his x-ray he said, "David, you have an extremely large mass over and compressing the heart." Following the biopsy confirming a malignant tumor, and pending our family's decision together, surgical removal was then a consideration...

Fair Chase Magazine "A Hunt to Remember" by Dr. David Meyer

When life gives you a second chance, you better take it. Being able to hunt at all in 2002 was miraculous; to be able to harvest a World's Record pronghorn was extraordinary...

Dr. Meyer's articles may be seen in their entirety on our website.

WWW.AZANTELOPE.ORG

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year, it's an honor, privilege, and challenge to serve as your president!

- An honor to follow in a long line of dedicated sportsmen and women who laid the foundation in establishing this organization.
- A privilege to be representing all of you in our collective efforts to help an animal that needs our attention more than ever.
- And a challenge, both in time, energy, and commitment to get the job done, not alone, but with every one of you doing what you can to help.

This past month has been incredible on the "Pronghorn Front". We've already been to Tucson, Prescott, and Flagstaff a couple times, not to mention all the activities in Phoenix. We also face the bane of all volunteer groups, too much to do, and not enough people to do it. I'm not going to lecture though, just challenge you to do what you can in your own way, be it with time, talent, or cash! We need some large doses of all of it.

We've set the stage this past month to participate at the ground level with Game & Fish Habitat Partnership Committees. There are twelve of them across the state, so if you want to be involved with planning conservation projects, here's your chance.

Our Project schedule is almost set, starting out in Unit 21 again. We'll be there for more fence work north of the Bloody Basin Road the weekend of March 27th. We're back to work on Anderson Mesa the weekend of May 15th, and rounding out the first half of the year, we're at Basin Lake near Springerville the weekend of June 12th.

Pronghorn need publicity too, so to that end, you'll see us at the Sportsman's Expo in February (help and get in free), and at Wildlife Fairs around the state. We will be at the Game & Fish Wildlife Fair in Prescott on April 1st.

Finally, we plan to revitalize our Annual Hunter's Clinic in August. We want it be an educational opportunity for the lucky few who draw a permit, a chance for some fun, and also a fundraising opportunity for the organization. We're not going to get into the banquet business this year, but we need to have a function where our membership can attend, enjoy, contribute and maybe take something home!

Thanks for again trusting us with your money and joining our efforts. I can assure you, we'll continue to work hard at "preserving places for pronghorn"!

Jim Unmacht

Pronghorn is a quarterly newsletter for the members of AAF. Letters, comments, news items, articles, pictures and stories are all welcome and will be considered for publication. Address all such items to:

Jim Unmacht, at Pronghorn Editor, PO Drawer 15501, Phoenix, AZ 85060, or by email at azantelope@cox.net.

HOOKER BASIN UNIT 21 WORK PROJECT

NOVEMBER 15, 2003

Our final project of 2003 took us back to Unit 21, camping again along Yellow Jacket Creek off the Dugas Road. We ended the year with another excellent turnout of 41 people! This time we concentrated our efforts around Hooker Tank and Black Canyon Well in the northern part of Unit 21.

We kicked off Friday evening with a Powerpoint presentation by Richard Ockenfels, enlightening all the campfire spectators on the Pronghorn Lifecycle in Arizona. A great show!

Saturday morning broke with preparations made for the day's work. Our group was split in two, with one concentrating on modifying the enclosure around the Black Canyon Well, and the other making a couple miles of fence pronghorn friendly before ending the day modifying the fence enclosure around Hooker Tank. Some of the highlights...

- Throughout the day Professor David Brown mercilessly dealt fatal blows to woody shrubs encroaching on the grasslands!
- The youngest volunteers Jimmy Unmacht and Anthony Vallone, kept up with the veterans until blisters and tarantulas garnered their attention.
- While this was happening, Dana Bayer schooled us on the finer points of ATV loading & unloading, and later, she resolved the herding problem we had with some troublesome horses around Hooker Tank!
- AZGFD Wildlife Views cameras captured many of the proceedings and interviewed President Jerry Guevin, and 2004 Board member Connie Taylor for an upcoming TV show.
- The Canine Corps found the area void of quail, but rumor had it that back at camp, Zack was feasting!
- Professor Brown's Biology Class performed well along the line all day long.
- Albert, Troy, Dana & Sophia supervised a great work day with more progress for pronghorn!

As the day wound down, the hors d'oeuvre began with Chef Jerry rolling quesadillas off the Coleman. Thanks to the remaining Cooking Corps of Tracy Unmacht, Sue Foote, Dave Laird and yours truly, no bellies were left empty.

Richard closed the entertainment with another Powerpoint presentation, this one on the History of Pronghorn in AZ...the man knows his stuff!

Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this another successful project, helping to preserve more places for pronghorn! We'll look forward to seeing you again in 2004!

Jim Unmacht



Volunteer List

Phoenix Area – Troy Christensen, Jerry Guevin, Connie Taylor, Al & Marsha Sue, Dave Laird, Sue Foote, Liz Ridder, Jeff & Cynthia Mason, Angela Williams, Scott Mackey, Candan Soykan, Dana Bayer, Victoria Sutton, Krista Maney, Andrew Ross, Marilyn Knight, Traegen Knight, Sasha Keyel, Tommy Pettit, Alyssa Spradley, Jill Wodrich, Bob Ohmort, Dave Albo, Jim & Tracy Unmacht, Grace Unmacht, Jimmy Unmacht, Anthony Vallone, Rebecca Temblador-Vasquez, Selena Witkowski, Lindsay Brand, Jeff Anderson, Ryan Callahan, Peter Unmack, Lindsey Hendricks, David Brown, Sophia Fong
Mayer – Richard Ockenfels
Camp Verde - Albert Sillas

PRONGHORN ON THE LUCKY HORSESHOE

THE ARIZONA ANTELOPE FOUNDATION'S ADOPT-A-RANCH

By David E. Brown and Dana Bayer (AZ Game & Fish)

Sometime in 1991, the Arizona Game and Fish Commission initiated an “ADOPT-A-RANCH” program in which sportsmen’s organizations could conduct work projects designed to help wildlife within the framework of day-to-day ranch operations. Another benefit of this self described “Win-Win” program, was to foster better sportsmen-rancher relations. Some of the projects that were envisioned included modifying fences to facilitate the movement of big game animals, develop or improve waters for wildlife, and thin or remove junipers, mesquite, and other invasive shrubs. It was, and remains, a good program.

The Arizona Antelope Foundation was interested immediately, and one of the first organizations to participate. The AAF initially selected a ranch above the Mogollon Rim as its *Adopt-A-Ranch* but the ranch was sold after only one work project and the partnership was terminated so the AAF had to move on. A new *Adopt-A-Ranch* was called for—one that would have a manageable population of pronghorn on mostly public land *and* an owner willing to cooperate with the Game Department and AAF in the management of these animals.



The Horseshoe Ranch in Game Management Unit 21 fit the bill perfectly. This 65,000 acre ranch is within an hour’s drive of Phoenix, is almost entirely on federal land, and shares a pronghorn population estimated to be about 150 head at any given time. Most of the pronghorn habitat is between 3,500 and 4,000 feet elevation, and consists of semi desert grassland grading upward into chaparral. A further incentive for selecting this ranch was that AGFD Research Biologist and AAF member Richard Ockenfels, had evaluated the quality of pronghorn habitat in Unit 21, thus providing valuable insights into what could be accomplished. Kyle Cooper, the Unit 21 Wildlife Manager, was also greatly interested in pronghorn and the unit has a long history of comparable survey and hunt data.

Thus encouraged, AAF members Nancy Lewis and Dave Brown contacted the Horseshoe’s owner, Dick Willcox, who arranged a tour of the ranch, then under a 14 pasture rest-rotation grazing plan supervised by the Tonto National Forest and Bureau of Land Management. Not only

was the ranch well suited for multiple-use management, Dick, exhibited a genuine interest in pronghorn. In fact, he proved such an agreeable *Adopt-A-Ranch* partner, that our members sometimes wondered if he wasn’t more interested in managing the Horseshoe for wildlife than for cattle.

Arlen Flax, *Adopt-A-Ranch* Coordinator for the AGFD, approved our selection of the Horseshoe, and in the spring of 1998, we conducted our first of many work projects there. Having a perimeter of nearly 25 miles, and containing more than 40 miles of interior fences, the Horseshoe offered plenty of potential projects. But since not all of the fences needed work, we prioritized our effort. We began by raising the bottom strand of 2 ½ miles of the fence surrounding the diminutive Copper pastures and replacing the barbed wire with wildlife-friendly smooth wire. One by one, other projects followed, and with the assistance of Arizona State University’s Conservation Biology class, Copper, New Mill, Perry Mesa, and Bobcat pastures were made compatible for pronghorn. An especially rewarding project was the removal and replacement of the fences surrounding Antelope and Perry tanks. These enclosures were decidedly hostile to wildlife, and pronghorn use of Antelope Tank increased almost immediately after our modifications.

Although the apparent increase in pronghorn use of the Horseshoe Ranch is encouraging, not all is well with the pronghorn in Unit 21. Pronghorn observations elsewhere in the unit appear to be in decline, and increasing numbers of the unit’s pronghorn seem to be in the south half of the unit, primarily on the Horseshoe Ranch. This is distressing because mesas in the northern half of the unit, especially Marlow and Yellow Jacket, were historically the preferred habitat and fawning areas. It also appears that historic use of Black Mesa in the south has declined in recent years

A number of both physical and organizational changes were also now taking place. The year 2002 saw one of the worst droughts to hit central Arizona in 100 years. Pronghorn productivity and populations suffered accordingly. Despite transplants of 238 animals from Utah and Colorado in 1997 and 1998, the Unit 21 herd has not materially increased in numbers over the long run (Fig. 1). Even more troubling is that relative pronghorn fawn recruitment rates (fawns per 100 does) hit an all time low in 2002 (Fig. 2).

The management of the Horseshoe changed to a more cattle-orientated operation when Dick’s son, Charlie and his wife Cynthia took over the ranch, which has just recently been acquired by a mining corporation for possible trade. Troy Christensen replaced Arlen as the *Adopt-A-Ranch* coordinator. President Clinton, by Executive Order, declared the entire southern half of the pronghorn habitat in Unit 21, including the Horseshoe Ranch, as part of the 71,000 acre Agua Fria National Monument, resulting in an ongoing land use planning effort to finalize management plans for the monument. The BLM has held a series of meetings in which the AAF and AGFD have stressed the importance of the Monument to pronghorn.

Figure 1- Total pronghorn observed in GMU 21 1984-2003; 1987 Historic high =294 (AGFD Survey data).

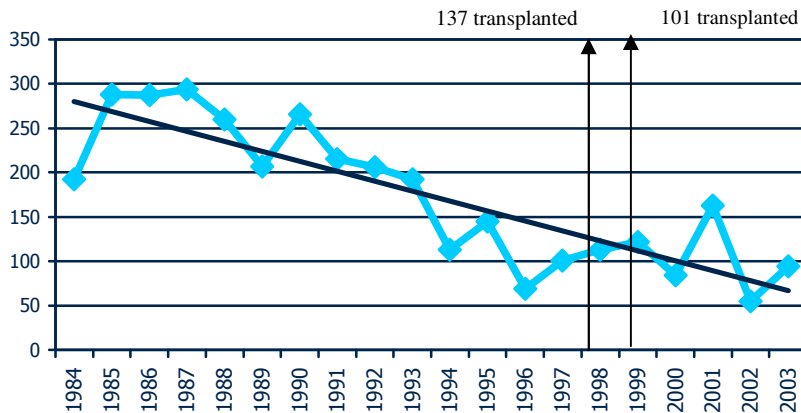
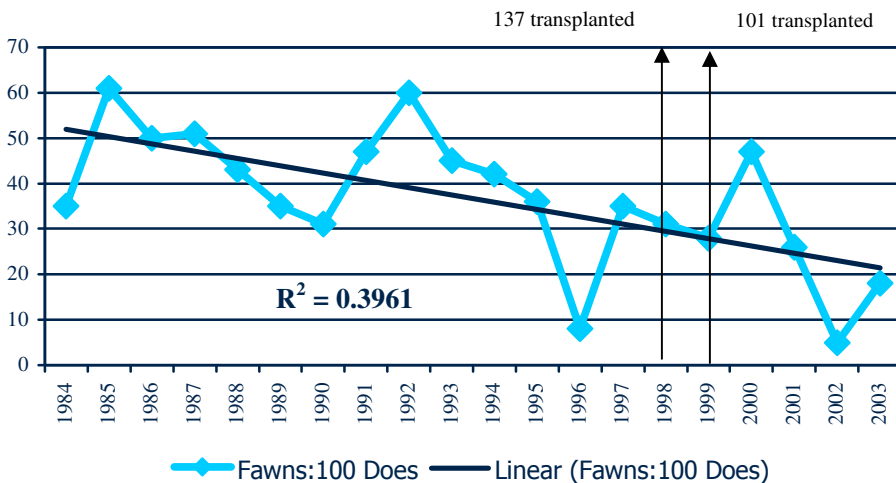


Figure 2- Pronghorn Fawns:100 Does 1984-2003; 1973 Historic high= 93:100 does



Many of the most damaging fences on the Horseshoe have been rectified; the AAF, AGFD, and Camp Verde Ranger District of the Prescott National Forest (PNF) have now begun a joint program of modifying fences in pronghorn habitat to the north; and the BLM and Tonto National Forest continue to conduct burns and juniper thinning efforts on their lands. A GMU 21 Pronghorn Workgroup (AAF, AGFD & PNF) has been initiated to look closely at population trends and habitat issues to the north (see related article, “*GMU 21 Pronghorn Workgroup*” on page 9 for the rest of the story). A more thorough inventory of the unit’s waters, fences, burns and juniper thinning priorities has now ensued, and the number of planned projects accelerated. Accomplishing these tasks will be difficult, however, given the limited resources available. And, unless the AAF gets more volunteers, it will be difficult to accomplish even the fence modifications task within reasonable time limits.

Meanwhile, the pronghorn population is holding at about 150 animals, and we can all be proud of the progress obtained thus far. Much more remains to be done than has yet been accomplished however, and increased visitor use, power-line easement requests and freeway expansion proposals require having to make our remaining pronghorn habitat in Unit 21 more productive. The potential for work in the unit remains vast. A major priority is to get more involved with woody-shrub removal as increasing densities of mesquite, acacia, mimosa, and juniper, constitute one of the greatest detriments to pronghorn habitat in this unit at present. We also need to modify four miles of fences on Black Mesa in the southern half of the unit and ensure that pronghorn remain an Agua Fria Grassland National Monument priority.

In summary, much has been done, but the AAF needs to change its game if the pronghorn in Unit 21 are to prosper. Making the Horseshoe Ranch “lucky” for pronghorn is no longer enough. We need to be playing “21” with a full deck of players.

GETTING DRAWN FOR PRONGHORN

BY BRIAN WAKELING AZ GAME & FISH

I've heard a number of people express a variety of opinions about what the Internet online application procedure has done to the draw rate. It has been described as the worst thing to happen in wildlife management to the best thing in customer service. As with most innovations, it is probably somewhere in between.

I have included graphs representing the first choice application rate for pronghorn, and the total hunt applications over the past 10 years. There is no doubt that more people are applying for all species, including pronghorn. A couple years ago, we had over 16,000 applicants for nearly 1100 permits. While bighorn applications have doubled and buffalo applications have quadrupled, pronghorn applications have risen over 60% during the same period. Conversely, deer applications are at lower levels than they have been historically, and elk applications have continued to increase at a steady rate. Total applications mirror elk applications pretty closely. So what does this mean in your chances to draw a tag?

For the last few years, we have offered about 1000 pronghorn tags statewide. Using that number of tags, and the pre-online pronghorn applicant total of 16,000, your chance of drawing a tag was about 6.25%. Now with nearly 27,000 people applying for those same 1000 tags, your chances of getting drawn are about 3.7%. Of course your real chances vary based on how many people apply for the hunt you apply for. Percentage wise, your chances of drawing a tag haven't gotten that much worse. I will admit though, they certainly didn't get any better, and the odds aren't real good.

For pronghorn, you might note in the graph that the application rate had started to plateau right up to the point where we introduced the online application. Since that time, we have had an increase in application pressure, although not as great as that seen for buffalo or bighorn sheep. Reasons for this difference may be explained largely by the price of the tag and the relative difficulty in laying out money up front.

There is little anyone can do to greatly improve your odds of drawing a tag when the odds are overwhelmingly against you, as it is with bighorn sheep, buffalo, or even pronghorn. For illustration purposes, even if only those who routinely applied were allowed to be drawn using some type of a preference system and it was limited to the original 16,000 pronghorn applicants from 2 years ago, it would still take about 16 years to cycle through all those applicants. For bighorn, using the same formula with approximately 8,000 applicants and 100 permits, it would take 80 years to cycle through the applicants! To my knowledge, the bonus point system is the fairest system available for awarding tags.

As for the online application, it reduces error and rejection rate, decreases the human resource cost for key entering each application, and doesn't tie up your money for months while you await the draw results. Although the Department does not benefit from keeping your money in an interest bearing account until the draw occurs, we also don't have to pay overtime to temporary personnel just to get all the applications entered into the draw.

So what can you do? Take a close look at the drawing odds published in the *Hunt Arizona* book published annually. Some information on draw odds is also listed in the back of the hunting regulations each year. This information tells you what the odds were last year, what the surveys looked like last year, and gives you some ideas for what might be feasible this year. It doesn't guarantee that you will be drawn, but it may give you an edge that just might make the difference in this year's lottery.

We are always open to innovation. So if you have any better ideas, just let us know. We are a sensitive lot, so please be gentle!

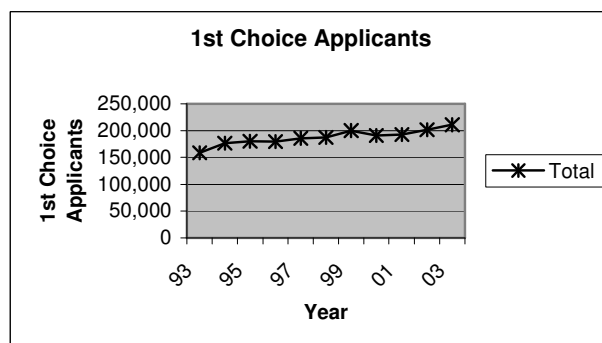
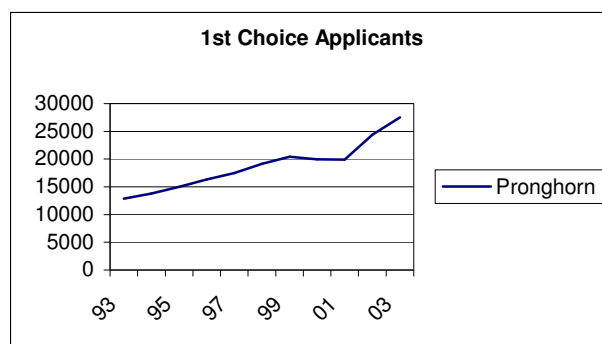


Photo courtesy AZ Game & Fish

CAN YOU SCORE #49? GUESS RIGHT & WIN \$!



In our last edition of the *Pronghorn*, I introduced you to #49. I found his remains while hunting with my son in the forest north of Mormon Lake in Unit 6A. I also told you I'd tell you what he would have scored, and I will, but before we divulge what our official scorers came up with, we've decided to hold a contest for all members!

This is how the contest will work.

- It is open to AAF members only, and you can only enter via email.

- In your email, we would like you to tell us 3 things:

1. Yes or no, can we send you future Pronghorns via email? (This could save us several thousand dollars annually)
2. Yes or no, can we add your email address to our Action Alert email group? (For important matters only)
3. Finally, what's your guess on #49's Boone & Crockett score?

- Email your entry to azantelope@cox.net with all three questions answered, and you'll be entered to win.

- The contest ends at midnight on 3/31/04, and the winner will be drawn at our April 12th Board meeting. The winner will be announced via our Action Alert email list and posted on www.azantelope.org on April 13th.

(AAF Board members aren't eligible, nor are our B & C Official Scorers!)

The winning entry will receive a \$50 gift certificate to their choice of either the Sportsman's Warehouse or Cabelas!



PRESCOTT HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE & PRESCOTT PRONGHORN PROBLEMS

Jim Unmacht and Dave Laird traveled to Chino Valley on Monday night January 26th to participate in the local Prescott HPC meeting. This effort emanated out of a desire to learn first hand what some of the issues in the Prescott and Chino Valley areas are, as well as a desire to establish some contacts in the area. The explosive growth continues to adversely impact pronghorn, and unless some concerted efforts are made to address some of these pronghorn matters, we'll be faced with continuing to be reactive, versus working to be proactive.

Aside from some discussions on the various projects being reviewed, WM Eric Gardner wants the HPC to undertake a management plan for pronghorn in the area. Jim encouraged this action, in view of the inevitable future conflicts between development and habitat.

One of the matters being watched is the City of Prescott's assessment and plans for purchasing the CV/CS Ranch for water rights. Everyone's hope has been that the city would preserve the land and keep the ranch intact. A couple days after the meeting, we learned the city was thinking about not doing that, and instead, selling off portions of it to minimize their costs!

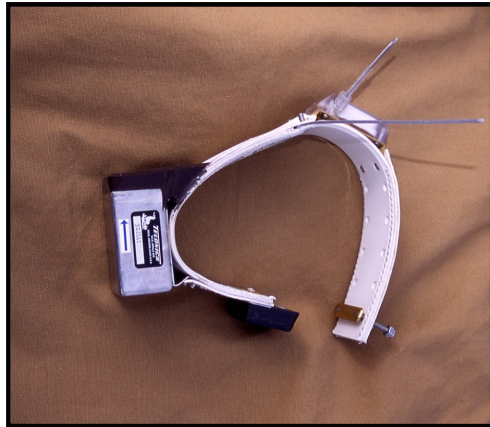
We've got an action plan in the works to help stop this...stay tuned via our website for an Action Alert, as we'll need everyone's help to ensure we don't lose this last opportunity to stop some of this development and continue to preserve some space for pronghorn in the valleys north of Prescott!

ANDERSON MESA COLLAR PROJECT REPORT

On November 6, 2003, Jerry Guevin, Jim Unmacht, and Mike Morganthal rendezvoused with Richard Ockenfels & crew, near Ashhurst Lake to capture and collar eight pronghorn on Anderson Mesa. The new Telonics GPS collars (\$5000 each!) were going to be put on the animals, the significance being, this new collar has been used only one other place in the world prior to this event. After Jerry and Jim learned how to untangle the capture nets, the rest of the project went off without a hitch!

These new GPS collars are programmed to record the animals' locations once or twice a day, depending on how they're programmed. Then once a week, Game & Fish flies the area at certain times. During this several hour window, the collars activate and upload data to the researcher flying over head. The data is then down loaded at the Department, and the GPS coordinates plotted. In two months time, Richard is already getting invaluable data that previously might've taken many months or years to obtain.

We hope to gain much more knowledge of where these pronghorn go, the extent of their territory, migration patterns, and other factors that are influencing their movement. This information will be invaluable in helping the Game & Fish Department, and the AAF, work to manage the pronghorn herd, and enhance the grassland habitat on Anderson Mesa.



Photos courtesy AZ Game & Fish

ANDERSON MESA MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

This area started off the new year with a lot of focus and attention. The groundwork was outlined at the State Habitat Partnership Committee meeting on January 17th in Phoenix, Jim Unmacht attended that meeting. G & F Supervisor Ron Seig outlined some of what happened on the Mesa in 2003, and some of the plans for this year. On January 22nd, David Brown traveled to Flagstaff to meet with the Anderson Mesa Citizens Working Group for Landscape Assessment. Then on January 31st, Jim Unmacht, Dave Laird, and Jerry Guevin went back up to Flagstaff for the Anderson Mesa Adaptive Habitat Improvement meeting. The action plans for 2004 have been put in motion. Throughout the meeting, the AAF impact was noticeable and acknowledged! This ran the gamut from the native grass seed purchased by us after the Lizard Fire, to our May Work Project cutting junipers, to our other habitat improvement projects allocated via special tag fund proceeds, our involvement in the collar project, and the aerial gunning during the fawning time.

Some of the important issues with AAF impact being planned for this year include; another work project scheduled for the weekend of May 15th, follow through with other special tag fund projects scheduled for completion, and work towards either a Christmas Tree "depredation hunt", and/or firewood salvage effort, to name a few.

The bottom line is, the collective efforts of the AAF and many other groups and organizations, are having a positive impact on Anderson Mesa, both from a habitat improvement standpoint, as well as from a pronghorn numbers standpoint!

As we hope for more moisture, we continue to make headway!

GMU 21 PRONGHORN WORKGROUP SPECIAL TAG FUNDS AT WORK

By Dana Bayer (AZ Game & Fish) and David Brown (AAF)



Photo Courtesy AZ Game & Fish

In recent years, summaries of pronghorn population trends, along with deer and javelina trends, for GMU 21 have heightened Department and AAF concerns with wildlife habitat management in the Unit. At the same time the AAF's involvement with the Horseshoe Ranch in GMU 21 has kept their attention focused on the Unit's pronghorn population. In taking a closer look at these trends we discovered several distressing facts. First, total pronghorn observed, groups observed, and relative fawn recruitment (fawns:100 does) trends were declining (see "*Pronghorn on the Lucky Horseshoe*" on page 4). We also observed similar declining trends for other game species in the Unit, including deer and javelina. Additionally, while trends were declining overall (Unit wide), pronghorn appeared to be selecting for habitat in the south (BLM and Tonto National Forest) more so than habitat in the north (Prescott National Forest). By splitting annual survey data by north vs. south observations we found that total pronghorn observed (Fig.1 & 2) and relative fawn recruitment trends appeared different (Fig.3 & 4). While it is generally understood that many factors or combination of factors control population trends at any point in time, no single factor may be the sole causative factor for change, and many of these factors are out of our control (ie. drought). Given these facts, we still have need for concern and management actions should follow to affect positive changes where we can.

Figure 1- Total Pronghorn Observed Northern GMU 21- PNF (R2 = 0.7706, AGFD).

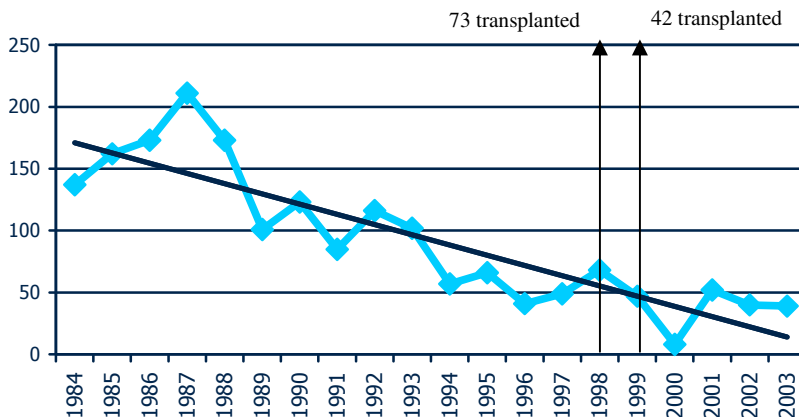


Figure 2- Total Pronghorn Observed Southern GMU 21- BLM & TNF ($R^2 = 0.2362$, AGFD).

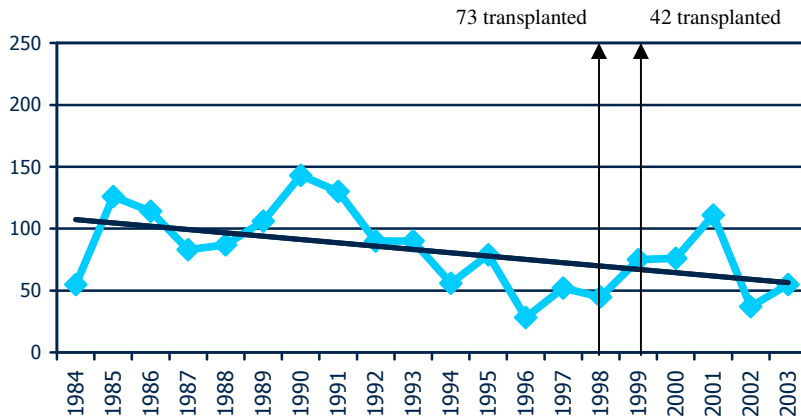


Figure 3- 1984-2003 Fawns: 100 Does in Northern GMU 21 ($R^2=0.6046$, AGFD).

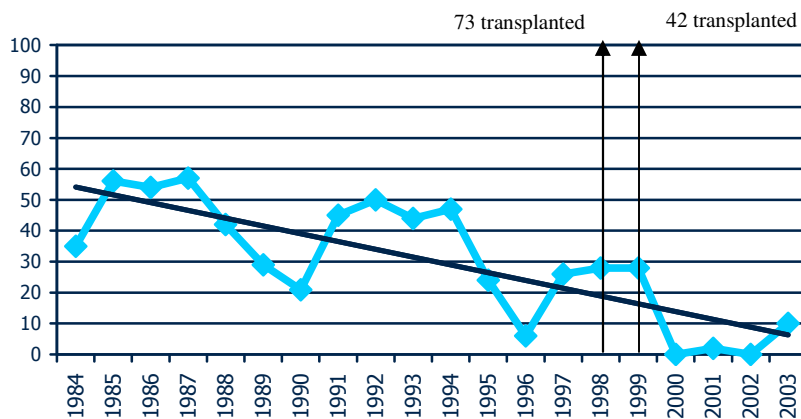
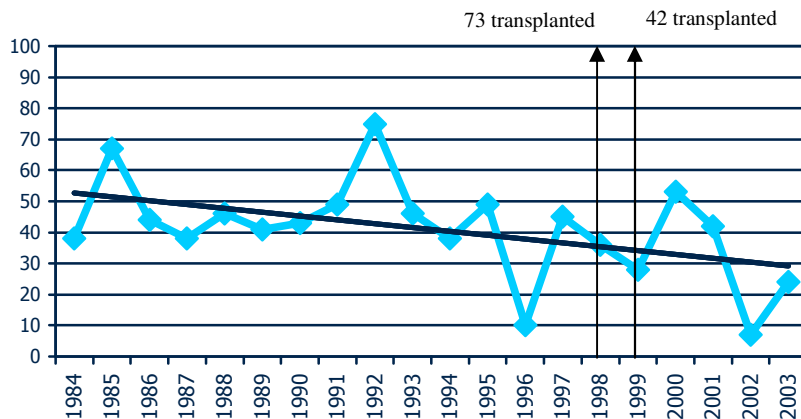


Figure 4- 1984-2003 Fawn: 100 Does in Southern GMU 21- BLM & TNF ($R^2= 0.2079$



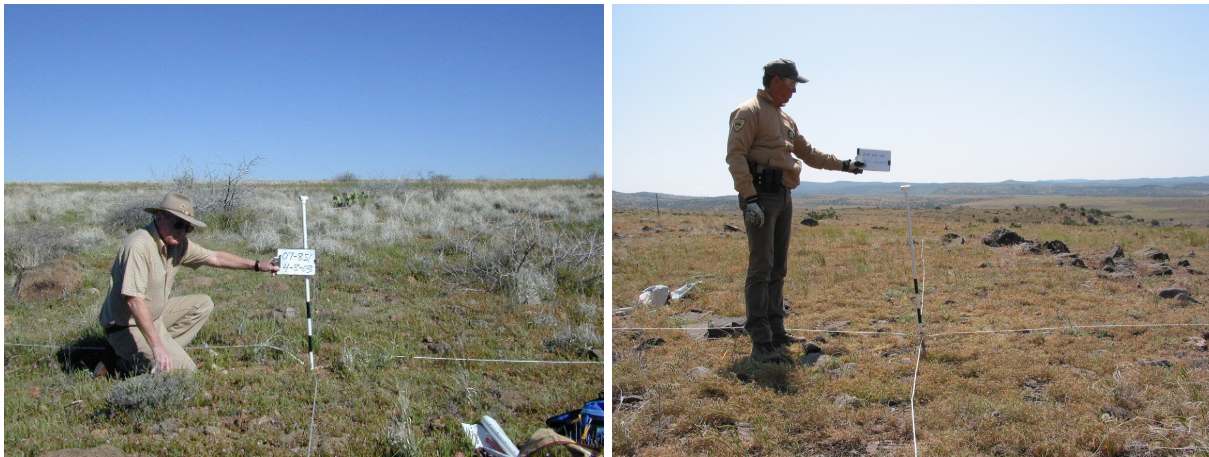
And so a cursory examination began of pronghorn habitat north of Horseshoe Ranch by AAF and AGFD personnel. In looking at all the possible factors including availability and distribution of waters, impacts of predators, fences, and habitat loss; it was becoming increasingly suspect that changes in habitat quality were the underlying problem. Field observations seemed to indicate that pronghorn populations on the PNF were experiencing greater competition from livestock for forage, had less fawning cover, and were benefiting less from recent burns than on the Horseshoe Ranch. Compounding this discouraging assumption was the onset of several drought years, making finding solutions more complicated and politically difficult. (continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

In response to these escalating concerns a GMU 21 Pronghorn Workgroup was created Spring of 2002 to bring concerns and issues to the table and to work on solutions. This workgroup is comprised of representatives from the AAF, AGFD, and the Prescott National Forest. The three organizations have agreed to collaborate on resolutions, looking at existing data and developing studies designed to provide better insights into what is ailing the pronghorn in Unit 21.

Since then a whole suite of meetings and projects have followed. With funds generated by the AAF through the sale of special pronghorn tags, the AGFD began conducting monthly aerial surveys to document current pronghorn habitat use and key fawning areas. Monthly aerial surveys began in May 2002 and will end June 2004. These monthly surveys have provided timely insight about where pronghorn does currently fawn and what the general population seasonal distribution is. We have been able to validate our suspicion that pronghorn are not using habitat on Yellow Jacket, Marlow and Black Mesas to the extent that they used to. This data has been available to help in planning discussions with the workgroup partners to identify areas that we need to focus management changes towards improving fawning habitat quality. And as an added bonus... this data has aided in planning discussions with the BLM for the Agua Fria National Monument Land Use Plan. Once surveys end this spring the Department plans to continue extended spring survey flights, apart from the normal July population survey, to continue closely monitoring pronghorn fawning and habitat use. This information will be fed to our land management partners in support of coordinated efforts to improve fawn recruitment into the GMU 21 population.

While all this research has been happening overhead, the Department initiated a habitat study to assess the availability of fawn hiding cover on the ground (See pictures below). We are evaluating the composition and structure of the vegetation around 59 study waters across GMU 21 for a total of 4 spring fawning periods (2002-2005). Past research has taught us all about the habitat requirements and selectivity of pronghorn fawns and nursery herds. What we are doing is evaluating what is actually out there right now against what they need. This information will be used to help influence land management decisions for the benefit of the GMU 21 population. Once again special tag fund monies have helped to fund the analysis of this work.



Photos courtesy AZ Game & Fish

Meanwhile, Dave Brown (AAF) is busy with monthly collections and analysis of pronghorn pellets to look at seasonal food habits for the GMU 21 population. As monthly aerial surveys are flown, the Department is providing Dave with GPS locations to target for collecting pellet groups. This has saved Dave a tremendous amount of footwork as one might imagine, and has facilitated collection of the freshest specimens possible. Once again this data may be helpful in affecting land management decisions. If he can determine that there are a few primary forage species that are appropriate for monitoring as “key species”; species that could be used to indicate maintenance of adequate habitat quality for pronghorn, we may be able convince land management partners to incorporate them into their allotment monitoring routine.

And then there are fence projects! Volunteers from AAF, ASU, AGFD, PNF, and other interested citizens have been busy the past two years reworking fences in the “north country” to meet wildlife standards. Many miles have been accomplished and more are planned. The next project will focus on fences in what is considered a pronghorn travel corridor. Come join us on March 27th for some hands on, feel good work! Also related to improving travel corridors is the issue of juniper and other woody species invading previously open areas. AGFD is currently developing grant proposals to fund juniper thinning in collaboration with the BLM, and possibly Prescott and Tonto Forests. Improving fence structures and thinning junipers will hopefully have a positive effect on pronghorn movement between the northern and southern portions of habitat in GMU 21.

As you have heard, lots of work is ongoing to facilitate a “data driven” dialogue, to resolve land management concerns, and to positively affect pronghorn population trends to the extent that is humanly possible. Workgroup meetings will continue and tough decisions will have to follow, but we can all feel thankful that at least we have a commitment by stakeholders to work on solutions. In the meantime, the drought continues to bear down on us and we all wait with baited breath for more rain as the upcoming fawning season approaches!



SONORAN PRONGHORN STATUS

In 2001 we had a herd of about 150 Sonoran pronghorn. A couple years later, that herd was decimated by the drought, and many starved to death because there was no food left in their habitat and range. There are approximately 20 animals left in the United States on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge in Southern Arizona. Approximately 300 animals survive across the border in Sonora, Mexico.

An international effort is underway to bring this endangered species back from the brink by establishing a captive breeding group on the Cabeza Prieta. A 640 acre section of predator proof land has been set up, and several remaining US Sonorans, are going to receive some companions from Mexico.

The Mexican Sonoran transplant began January 16th & 17th. Two does were successfully transplanted, but it wasn't without some problems and fatalities. In the course of making the effort, 5 animals died, one from a medical problem, and four from "capture myopathy", the build up of lactic acid in the system following overexertion. This disruption of the metabolic process results in "hyperthermia", or overheating. After the first day's devastating results, the capture and transfer process was altered, resulting in the two does successfully making the trip to the Cabeza's enclosure. As of this writing, the two does are acclimating well to their new surroundings, and it appears one of them is pregnant! With some good fortune and some rainfall, hopefully the Sonoran pronghorn future will get brighter! We'll continue to follow the efforts to save this endangered species.

YAVAPAI RANCH LAND EXCHANGE

The AAF has backed this effort for a couple years now. In essence, the checkerboard holdings of the US Forest Service in northern Yavapai County would be consolidated in a land swap with rancher Fred Ruskin. The consolidation would be a key habitat enhancement for pronghorn and other species in the area. It would also allow a much more cohesive management of the US Forest Service lands. The swap would include expansion lands for Flagstaff and Williams, creating economic opportunity for those cities.

While most people back those actions, including most of Arizona's Congressional delegation, there is one major sticking point. That is, the people in the Verde Valley are concerned over the development impact and related water issues with some of the land Ruskin would receive near Camp Verde. The December 6, 2003 Town Hall meeting sponsored by Senator John McCain, heard these issues loud and clear. Over 600 people were in attendance, and seemingly everyone there supported the Forest Service land consolidation, however they were against the proposed local development and water impact in the Verde Valley.

Senator McCain acknowledged the issues and indicated he would work to resolve the matter, but also said the forest consolidation needed to happen as soon as possible. We continue to wait for his recommendations.

"FOR THE BOOK" BY BILL KEEBLER

(continued from page 1)

fundraiser. He hunted unit 13B with guide John Caid. Dr. Meyer's antelope exceeded the prior World's Record by 1 4/8 points. The prior World's Record was taken by Michael J. O'Haco in 1985 in unit 4A. Four of five of the top all-time record book antelope now come from Arizona.

The Boone and Crockett Club award minimum is 80 and the all time minimum is 82. The Club publishes a Big Game Awards book every three years. The next one will be the 25th and will cover 2001, 2002 and 2003. All animals accepted during these years that meet or exceed the award minimum are listed in this record book. After two award periods (every six years) a Records of North American Big Game record book is published that lists all animals that meet or exceed the all time minimum. The next Records of North American Big Game book will be the 12th edition and is due out in 2005.

The Arizona record book minimum for pronghorn is 80 points. Six Arizona record books have been published, one every five years. The first was published in 1970 and the millennium edition was published in 2000. Interestingly the Arizona record listed in the 1970 book had a score of 101 and 6/8 points. The pronghorn was later found to have had its length enhanced and was eliminated for later state record books.

Annual Competition awards are presented each year for pronghorn and most other species of big game in Arizona. In order to win the Annual Competition the trophy must be legally taken in Arizona in accordance with the Boone and Crockett Club Rules of Fair Chase, during the competition year and the score chart must be received by the Arizona Wildlife Trophies Committee by May 1 of the following year.

In the year 2001 there were seven entries received with the largest being a 91 and 6/8 buck taken by Dr. Meyers. This was the Annual Competition winner. An Honorable Mention went to Bill Drake for an 88 point buck from unit 4A. In the year 2002 there were four entries with Dr. Meyer's 95 point buck again winning the Annual Competition. Honorable Mentions went to Bill Drake for an 87 and 6/8 buck and to Mark Roggenbuck for an 83 and 6/8 buck. Both Honorable Mention bucks were from unit 9. So far there have been seven entries submitted for 2003. The largest is a 94 point buck from unit 10 taken by Patrick Brewer.

Bill Keebler is an official Boone and Crockett scorer. He is a Past President of the Arizona Antelope Foundation, and also serves on our Board of Directors.

BEN AVERY SHOOTING FACILITY (BASF) NEWS

H.B. 2158; Shooting Range Preservation Bill, is making its way through the Arizona House of Representatives. On January 28th, the House Utilities and Municipalities Sub Committee unanimously passed the bill. The Chair of this subcommittee is a friend of sportsmen, Rep. John Nelson, a former Phoenix City Councilman. He had help in drafting this legislation from another friend of sportsmen, Phoenix City Councilman Dave Siebert.

This bill would require the BASF be preserved in its entirety at its current location, and it would protect it from the encroaching development going on all around it. It would also require approval of the Governor and Legislature for any potential closure (sale or partial sale). A copy of an endorsement from the NRA is displayed on our website. You can read information on the bill, as well as information on your legislator in our Action Alerts!

Make sure your legislator knows you support this bill!

Phoenix Point of Pride...the BASF has also been nominated as a Phoenix Point of Pride! Go to www.pride.azcentral.com and vote, as this First Class National facility deserves this recognition! You have until March 12 to vote, and can also find the information on our website.

BABBITT RANCHES RECEIVE AWARDS

The National Private Lands Stewardship Award was presented to the Babbitt Ranches in January at the Arizona Game & Fish Commissioner's Banquet. This award from the National Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies recognizes the contributions of private farm, ranch and forest lands in the conservation of the nation's fish and wildlife resources. The Babbitt Ranches were selected because they actively seek wildlife projects that benefit the entire ecosystem, participate in grazing lease planning and implementation, employ no-use on pastures impacted by drought, improved hundreds of miles of fencing to facilitate pronghorn movement on their land and have made water available from their springs for Arizona Game and Fish Department wildlife water hauling efforts. Accepting the award for the Babbitt Ranches was their President, William Cordasco, who just so happens to be a Sustaining Member of the AAF! Congratulations!

The Babbitt Ranches also had two of their people receive Volunteer of the Year awards, presented to Terry Rice and David Rogers by the AZ Game & Fish Commissioners. These two Arizona natives have been friends and hunting and fishing partners since they first met in 1946. They regularly help with fundraisers for conservation organizations and have modified nearly **1,000** miles of fence to help wildlife on the Babbitt Ranches in northern Arizona. Congratulations to these dedicated gentlemen!

MARCH 27TH WORK PROJECT BLOODY BASIN

For several years now, the Arizona Antelope Foundation has been improving pronghorn antelope habitat in Game Management Unit 21. We have been removing unneeded fences and making other fences antelope-friendly by removing the bottom barbed strand(s) and replacing it with a smooth strand 18" above the ground. These fence modifications allow the pronghorn antelope better movement and escape from predators and have been documented to increase antelope populations. For this project, volunteers will be modifying fences on important antelope travel corridors on Prescott National Forest lands.

We could use a lot of volunteer help for this project! Not only would we appreciate it, but it's a great opportunity to see what we do first hand, and it's not too far from home either!

Volunteers should meet at the base camp at 7:30 a.m. Saturday morning. **Directions to camp:** Take Bloody Basin exit (#259) from I-17. Travel east on main "Bloody Basin" road approximately 11.5 miles and turn left (north) on FS road #677. Follow FS #677 1.3 miles to camp. Watch for arrow signs. Portions of the roads are rough, requiring hi-clearance two-wheel drive, and can become slippery and difficult during and after rain.

Gloves and tools will be provided, and we'd suggest you wear a long sleeve shirt, pants and boots, as we'll be "in the field". The Arizona Antelope Foundation will provide dinner for the volunteers on Saturday evening at the camp. Volunteers may camp on Friday and/or Saturday nights, and plenty of firewood is available.

For more information contact Troy Christensen at the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Landowner Relations Program at 602-789-3492 or electronically at tchristensen@gf.state.az.us, or the AAF at azantelope@cox.net.



WCC LICENSE PLATES



AAF is a member of the Wildlife Conservation Council (WCC), which is an Arizona non-profit corporation organized exclusively for educational, literary, and scientific and conservation purposes. WCC represents the interest of over 30 hunting and fishing clubs and organizations throughout the state, the membership of which encompasses approximately 30,000 individuals.

The WCC introduced the State Wildlife Conservation license plate in 2003. We are encouraging all Arizona sportsmen and women to purchase this special plate. It is a small commitment that will make a huge difference in protecting and conserving Arizona's wildlife and its habitat, communicating and educating the public on issues of importance to conservationists. By joining other sportsmen and outdoor enthusiasts, you will be contributing \$17 annually upon purchase and each subsequent renewal.

Some of the projects and programs that have already been funded through the Conservation plate include Kids Fishing and Education Days, Kids Outdoor Rendezvous Day, other outdoor projects and scholarships. The WCC will be working aggressively at identifying and funding additional habitat and conservation projects in the coming year.

This license plate is only available through the WCC. To obtain an application contact the AAF at azantelope@cox.net, the WCC directly at 602-712-9822, or download an application from www.wrendezvous.com/wcc/app.pdf

CONSERVATION BONUS POINT

In late November of 2003, the Wildlife Conservation Council submitted to the AZ Game & Fish Commission a Draft Proposal of our vision of what the permanent big game "Conservation Bonus Point" would look like, both from how it would be implemented, to how it would work. The Commission now has put the proposal into the Rule Change process, and over the course of the next 2 years, it will be assessed, evaluated, and reviewed, to see if it should be "put on the books" and implemented. This process will run its course through 2004, and on into 2005, with a target resolution date no later than December of 2005.

So if all goes as planned, we hope to have another big game bonus point opportunity available to all hard working volunteers by the Spring of 2006! Keep your fingers crossed and watch for updates.

RIFLE RAFFLE

Weatherby Ultra Lightweight 257 Mag
Synthetic Gray Stock with Stainless Steel
Fluted Barrel
4.5 x 14 Zeiss Scope
Harris Bipod & Gun Case



TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

\$10 per ticket or 3 for \$25

**Call any of the Board Members listed in this
publication for your tickets
or plan to attend and purchase your tickets at
the**

**2004 Sportsman's Expo
Thursday, February 19th through
Sunday, February 22nd
Phoenix Civic Plaza**

**Winner will be drawn on the final day of the Expo.
(Need not be present to win.)**

\$ SPECIAL TAG PROCEEDS \$

Have you ever wondered how much money the Special Antelope Tags have generated for Arizona's pronghorn since they first were offered in 1985? How about \$648, 621. In the first year, two tags were raffled, one for \$2,441 by the SCI and one for \$3,340 by the AWF. In 2003, those same two tags were auctioned on behalf of the AAF...for \$40,000 at the ADBSS Banquet, and \$65,000 at the AES Banquet!

Since 1994, the AAF has received both Special Tags from the AZ Game & Fish Commission. We have then been involved with allocating the proceeds of these auctioned tags for pronghorn preservation and habitat development to the tune of \$562,100!

We are once again having the AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Society auction one tag on March 6th at their fundraising banquet, and the AZ Elk Society will auction the second tag at their fundraising banquet on March 27th. We hope to break the records from last year!



GAME AND FISH WAIVER & WORK PROJECT SAFETY

In the latter part of last year, there was some concern expressed by a number of Antelope Foundation & Sheep Society members, about the **Waiver and Release of Liability** being requested by the Arizona Game and Fish Department from all volunteers working on projects. Some of you signed this at our last work project. Subsequently, several members of each organization met with Department personnel to discuss our concerns and objections to the document in late November. As a result of these meetings the Department has agreed to **not** require the waiver on future work projects.

We also discussed the need to be aware of safety on projects. Since our inception, we have had a good safety record, and we want to continue that streak! We will continue to emphasize safety on all future projects at the morning orientation. We will also ask all volunteers at our morning sign in and registration to acknowledge they understood our recap on project safety. We will continue to provide leather gloves and tools in good working condition. We will also recommend long sleeve shirts, pants, and boots while working, along with some sort of eye protection, be it your own sunglasses or goggles, or safety glasses we'll have on hand. If you have your own equipment, we'd appreciate you bringing it along to the site. This will help us make sure we have enough on hand for those that need it. We want to make sure everyone handling wire, tools, and other equipment is as safe as possible.

We appreciate your efforts in the field, and want you to return home in good shape and without any mishaps!

PRESIDENT BUSH MEETS THE "HOOK & BULLET" CROWD

A couple weeks ago the President met with the leaders of 20 conservation and sporting groups to talk about issues relevant and important to the sportsmen and women of our country. Some of the groups in attendance included the NRA, the TRCP, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and the National Wildlife Federation. Four days after this meeting, the President stopped the effort underway to rewrite the Clean Water Act.

The impact of the hunting and fishing community is being recognized for its knowledge, economic impact and voting strength. An excerpt from a Los Angeles Times article on the meeting summed it up...

James Connaughton, chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, said that unlike the traditional environmental groups, the sportsmen worked "constructively" with the White House on the wetlands issue. The White House was already indebted to these groups for the work they had done in securing congressional approval of other administration initiatives, including conservation programs in the farm bill as well as authorization in the healthy forest bill to cut trees and clear underbrush to reduce the risk of wildfires.

Connaughton said these groups shared the president's commitment to "personal stewardship." "They work locally and do real work, spending their own time and money on the ground to produce really great conservation outcomes," said Connaughton, who attended the meeting between the president and the groups' leaders. Unlike traditional environmental groups, he said, "they do not dedicate the majority of their time to advertising campaigns and political bombshells."

NEW MEXICO AUCTION TAG

We have been fortunate to secure the donation of a pronghorn tag from the Armendaris Ranch in New Mexico, to use for fundraising purposes in the fall of 2004! Many thanks to Tom Waddell and the Armendaris Ranch for making this possible!

You'll begin to hear more about it soon, but our intent is to raffle the tag this spring and summer to help us raise much needed funds for our work projects.

This will be a guided hunt for a management buck, not a "trophy" hunt per se, but a fair chase hunt, for a good mature buck.

If you're like many of us that are in to double figure bonus points for Arizona pronghorn, you won't want to miss out on a chance to get back into the pronghorn hunting business, and help out our coffers while you're at it! Stay tuned for details!

PRESCOTT WILDLIFE FAIR

Come out and see us in Prescott on April 1st at the Game & Fish Wildlife Fair! We'll be at Prescott High School from 6 pm to 9 pm talking about pronghorn, what we do to help them, and how you can help too.

This is particularly important in the Prescott area, as a result of the habitat loss to home developments and subdivisions. We still have a chance to positively impact Prescott area pronghorn, but the window won't stay open long.

If you have any questions, let us know at azantelope@cox.net.

RECEIVE THIS PUBLICATION VIA EMAIL

Help us reduce costs and allocate more funds to where they are needed the most – pronghorn! In addition you will receive a newsletter with color photos and graphics that you can view online with links to our website. Enter our contest mentioned on page 7, or send us your request at azantelope@cox.net.



ARIZONA ANTELOPE FOUNDATION
P. O. BOX 15501
PHOENIX, AZ 85060-5501

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SPORTSMAN'S CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS!

WHAT?	WHEN?	WHERE?
The Arizona Antelope Foundation Board Meetings	March 8 6:30 PM April 12 6:30 PM May 10 6:30 PM	The Phoenix Zoo 455 N. Galvin Parkway
The Wildlife Conservation Council Board Meetings	February 24 6:30 PM March 23 6:30 PM April 27 6:30 PM	AZ Game & Fish Department 2221 W. Greenway Rd
AAF Work Projects	March 26-27 April 24 May 14-15 June 11-12	Unit 21 Bloody Basin WCC Road Cleanup Unit 5 Anderson Mesa Unit 1 Basin Lake
Sportsmen's Expo	February 19-22, 2004	AZ State Fairgrounds
AZ Desert Bighorn Sheep Banquet	March 6 4:00 PM	El Zaribah Shriner's Hall
AZ Elk Society Banquet	March 27	El Zaribah Shriner's Hall
AZ Game & Fish Wildlife Fair	April 1	Prescott High School
Baja California Pronghorn Conference	April 1-4	La Paz, Mexico
21 st National Pronghorn Workshop	May 2-4	Bismarck, ND
Sonoran Pronghorn Workshop	May 7	U of A, Tucson

If you have an upcoming event, send us the information at azantelope@cox.net.